

VZCZCXRO8525
RR RUEHGA RUEHHA RUEHQU
DE RUEHVC #0064 0782038
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 182038Z MAR 08
FM AMCONSUL VANCOUVER
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4875
INFO RUCNCAN/ALL CANADIAN POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEHVC/AMCONSUL VANCOUVER 7219

UNCLAS VANCOUVER 000064

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: LIBERALS BARELY WIN VANCOUVER-QUADRA BYELECTION

¶1. The byelection in Vancouver-Quadra proved to be closer than any had predicted, with Liberal Joyce Murray edging out her Conservative opponent, Deborah Meredith, by a mere .6 percentage points, or 151 votes. Voter turnout was light with about 34 percent of registered voters actually showing up to cast ballots due to spring break and rainy weather. Although not an outright win for the Conservatives, election results showed that the Liberals lost significant support in a riding they have held solidly since 1984. During the last election, in 2006, Liberal MP Stephen Owen defeated his Conservative opponent by almost 12,000 votes. This time around, the Conservatives targeted voters in the Chinese community and also were able to swing the Jewish vote, traditionally dominated by the Liberals.

¶2. The close election draws in to question the strategies of both parties. While a Conservative operative asserted that the Liberal machine was nowhere to be seen in the Quadra campaign, the same could be said for the Conservatives. Prime Minister Harper paid a visit to Vancouver just last week but did not do any campaigning for Meredith or even meet with her in a public venue. One of Meredith's campaign Chairmen told Poloff that they had decided not to bring in Harper because any appearance would require the Meredith campaign to reimburse a portion of the cost of Harper's trip per Canadian election laws. There was also a sense from the campaign that, although it would be close, the Liberals would win. Political pundits had been predicting a solid Liberal win since the beginning of the campaign. But in the past few weeks, the tide began to shift. The Chairman said that the phones at Meredith's headquarters were ringing off the hook for the past several weeks with inquiries from as far away as Asia; this in stark contrast to the early days of the campaign last fall when there appeared to be no hope at all for a victory in the riding. Liberal analysts blamed voter apathy for the close numbers and the light turnout, noting that a byelection is always difficult to predict and that, in the end, it is the win that matters.

¶3. Comment: Despite the Liberal victory, the party has suffered a huge loss of support in Quadra. What was once a given Liberal riding can no longer be counted on as a sure thing. The Conservatives, on the other hand, have garnered a massive boost even in defeat. They've proven their ability to make huge inroads into Liberal territory, and perhaps, with a little more effort and coordination with the national party, could even gain the prize the next time around. End comment.

LUKENS